

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7417

INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1833

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PBOR PBOF PEPR LE IS XF

SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: STATE 083531

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT SARKIS IS NOT YET READY TO SEND  
LEBANESE ARMY TO THE SOUTH. HE IS AFRAID THEY WILL FIND  
THEMSELVES IN UNTENABLE SITUATION AS LONG AS PALESTINIANS  
OCCUPYING NABATIYAH AND TYRE. HE IS WILLING TO SEND GENDARMERIE,  
HOWEVER, AND MAY BE PREPARED SEND SYMBOLIC ARMY PRESENCE. HE  
IS HOPING FOR NATIONAL CONSENSUS AGAINST PRESENCE ANY IRREGULAR  
ARMED UNITS ON LEBANESE TERRITORY. HE FEELS SYRIANS  
UNHAPPY ABOUT PRESENCE PALESTINIAN VOLUNTEERS HERE, BUT

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ARE PRISONERS OF THEIR IDEOLOGY. HE PUTS PRESENT  
NUMBER OF SUCH VOLUNTEERS AT 1,000 AND SAYS 150 ARE  
PREPARING TO LEAVE. END SUMMARY.

2. CALLED ON PRESIDENT SARKIS 0930 APRIL 3 TO DISCUSS  
SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON. STARTED OUT BY SAYING THAT I  
WAS COMING WITH SAME MESSAGE I HAD DELIVERED TO BOUTROS ON

SATURDAY, I.E., THAT IT WAS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE THAT LEBANESE SEND ARMY AND GENDARMERIE TO SOUTH TO WORK WITH UNIFIL. WE REALIZED THERE WERE CERTAIN RISKS IN THIS BUT FELT LEBANESE HAD TO TAKE THEM. PRESENCE OF UNIFIL HAD INTERNATIONALIZED THE PROBLEM AND WE THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL TO LEBANON. WE WERE CONVINCED THAT ISRAEL WOULD WITHDRAW. THEY WOULD NOT, HOWEVER, TOLERATE CONTINUATION OF ROCKETING AND SHELLING OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS AND WHILE I GATHERED THERE HAD BEEN SOMETHING OF A CEASE-FIRE THE PAST FEW DAYS, IF PALESTINIANS RESUMED ATTACKS WE COULD BE SURE ISRAELIS WOULD REACT. IN MEANTIME WE WERE WORKING ON ISRAELIS TO COME FORWARD WITH TIMETABLE FOR WITHDRAWAL. WE WERE FAIRLY OPTIMISTIC THAT WE WOULD HAVE ONE SHORTLY AND THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE HELPFUL. WE WERE WORKING ON WALDHEIM TO KEEP AN OPEN MIND REGARDING EVENTUAL DEPLOYMENT OF UNIFIL NORTH OF LITANI AND BELIEVED HE MIGHT BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER THIS AFTER THE ISRAELIS HAD WITHDRAWN. WE SHOULD KEEP IN MIND, HOWEVER, THAT THE UN CONTINGENTS WOULD NOT BE PREPARED TO TAKE RISKS UNLESS THE LEBANESE ARMY WAS AT THEIR SIDE.

3. SARKIS QUOTED FRENCH PROVERB TO EFFECT THAT NOT TO TAKE A RISK WAS MORE DANGEROUS THAN TAKING ONE AND SAID HE WAS PREPARED TO TAKE RISKS BUT WHAT WAS POSED TODAY WAS MORE THAN JUST A RISK. SITUATION IN LEBANON WAS VERY EXPLOSIVE. IT COULD GO UP AT ANY MOMENT. IN THESE

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CONDITIONS TO SEND WEAK LEBANESE ARMY TO THE SOUTH WHERE IT WOULD BE AT MERCY OF PALESTINIANS WAS TO RISK TOO MUCH. ON THE OTHER HAND IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO SEND THE GENDARMERIE TO THE SOUTH AND GOL WAS TAKING THE NECESSARY MEASURES TO DO THIS. THEY HAD SENT A LIAISON OFFICER TO TYRE AND DETAILS OF DEPLOYMENT SHOULD BE WORKED OUT THROUGH HIM OR THROUGH THE GENDARMERIE COMMANDER IN SIDON WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE REGION.

4. I ASKED SARKIS WHAT WERE THE CONDITIONS THAT HE FELT HAD TO BE MET IF THE ARMY WAS TO GO TO THE SOUTH. HE SAID TYRE AND NABATIYAH HAD TO BE OCCUPIED (HE ACTUALLY SAID TYRE AND BEAUFORT, BUT LATER SAID HE MEANT BEAUFORT, ARNOUN AND NABITIYAH.) HE THEN SHOWED ME MEMORANDUM FROM GENERAL KHOURY SETTING FORTH THE PRECONDITIONS FOR ARMY TO MOVE TO SOUTH. THERE WERE TWO SETS OF CONDITONS. THE FIRST WAS THE SEIZURE OR HOLDING (MASK) OF NABATIYAH AND TYRE. THE MEMORANDUM DID NOT SAY BY WHOM, BUT PRESUMPTION WAS BY ADF, UNIFIL OR LEBANESE ARMY. THE SECOND CONDITION WAS THAT THERE BE CONTACT BETWEEN LEBANESE ARMY AND ARAB DEFENSE FORCES AT AYSHIYAH AND AT KAFR MISHKI (ABOUT EIGHT KILOMETERS WEST OF RASHAYYA). ALTHOUGH SARKIS DID NOT SAY SO, OBVIOUS INTENT WAS THAT ADF WOULD SECURE LINE OF COMMUNICATION.

5. I NOTED THAT QUESTION OF WHO WAS TO OCCUPY TYRE AND NABATIYAH WAS LEFT BLANK, BUT IF LEBANESE ARMY WERE TO DO IT IT WOULD GREATLY FACILITATE MISSION OF UNIFIL AND WE WOULD BE ALL FOR IT. PRESIDENT SAID HE VERY MUCH DOUBTED THAT LEBANESE ARMY WOULD BE ABLE TO DO THIS. IT WAS JUST TOO WEAK.

6. SARKIS THOUGHT, HOWEVER, THAT SETTING FORTH A TIMETABLE FOR WITHDRAWAL WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL BOTH IN THE NEGOTIATIONS THEY WERE IN PROCESS OF CARRYING OUT WITH PALESTINIANS THROUGH PRIME MINISTER HOSS AND IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH THE SYRIANS. ONCE THERE WAS SOME FIRM ASSURANCE REGARDING ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, THE SYRIANS MIGHT BE ABLE TO BE MORE COOPERATIVE.

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7. I SAID I COULD UNDERSTAND THAT UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS LEBANESE MIGHT NOT WANT TO SEND ALL OF THEIR ARMY TO SOUTH IMMEDIATELY, BUT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO GET LEBANESE MILITARY PRESENCE ON GROUND. HOW ABOUT SENDING A SYMBOLIC CONTINGENT? INSTEAD OF 3,000, SEND 300 NOW AND ASSIGN A DETACHMENT TO EACH UN CONTINGENT TO HELP IN CONTROLLING POPULATION AND TO GIVE SOME SENSE OF LEBANESE PARTICIPATION, AND THEN SEE HOW IT WENT. SARKIS SAID THAT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE AND HE WOULD DISCUSS IT WITH GENERAL KHOURY.

8. SARKIS SAID HE REGRETTED THAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON WHICH WE HAD ALL WORKED TOGETHER HAD NOT MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE ROLE OF UNIFIL WAS TO HELP THE LEBANESE ARMY AND THAT IT WAS THE LEBANESE ARMY WHICH WAS TO TAKE OVER FROM THE ISRAELIS WITH THE HELP OF UNIFIL RATHER THAN VICE-VERSA. HE SAID HE THOUGHT HE HAD MADE THIS POINT CLEAR DURING THE MEETING WE HAD HAD ON MARCH 15 (BEIRUT 1390). I SAID THE RESOLUTION DID IN FACT PROVIDE THAT THE ROLE OF UNIFIL WAS TO HELP LEBANESE REASSERT THEIR SOVEREIGNTY, BUT I HAD NOT UNDERSTOOD FROM HIM THAT HE MEANT THE RESOLUTION SHOULD BE PHRASED IN TERMS MEANING THE LEBANESE ARMY TAKE OVER FIRST FROM ISRAELIS. IF HE WANTED THIS TO BE THE CASE PERHAPS IT COULD BE ARRANGED WITH THE ISRAELIS NOT TO WITHDRAW UNTIL THE LEBANESE ARMY APPEARED ON THE SCENE TO TAKE OVER FROM THEM. SARKIS SAID, "NO", HE COULD NOT DO ANYTHING THAT WOULD DELAY THE ISRAELIS WITHDRAWAL.

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EXDIS

9. SARKIS SAID THAT LEBANON'S PROBLEM REMAINED INTACT. NOTHING HAD BEEN SOLVED. THE GOL'S PREOCCUPATION NOW WAS WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE BETWEEN THE LITANI AND THE ZAHRANI. THIS WAS AN AREA IN WHICH THEY WERE NOT ENTITLED TO HAVE ANY ARMED PRESENCE UNDER EITHER THE CAIRO OR SHTAURA AGREEMENTS, BOTH OF WHICH HAD BEEN SUPERCEDED BY RESOLUTION 425, IN ANY EVENT. IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT AFTER THE ISRAELIS HAD BEGUN TO WITHDRAW THE SYRIANS WOULD BECOME MORE COOPERATIVE ON THE QUESTION OF THIS AREA NORTH OF THE LITANI. AT THE MOMENT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO MOVE FORWARD. HE REALLY DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT THE ISRAELIS HAD IN MIND IN LEAVING BEAUFORT IN THE HANDS OF THE PALESTINIANS. IT WAS ONLY  
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THREE KILOMETERS FROM ISRAEL AND ALL OF THE HULA PLAIN WAS EXPOSED TO FIRE FROM THAT POINT. THEY TALKED ABOUT CLEANING OUT THE REGION AND YET THEY LEFT THIS NEXT OF FEDAYEEN. IT DID NOT MAKE SENSE TO HIM. I NOTED THAT IN THE FIRST PLACE WE HAD WARNED THE ISRAELIS NOT TO GO NORTH OF THE LITANI AND THEY THEMSELVES SEEMED NOT TO HAVE HAD THAT INTENTION. FURTHERMORE, TAKING BEAUFORT WAS NOT AN EASY JOB, GIVEN THE TERRAIN AROUND IT.

10. WE DISCUSSED THE QUESTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE AND I ASKED HIM IF IT WAS GOING TO BE DEBATED IN PARLIAMENT TOMORROW. HE SAID HE DOUBTED IT VERY MUCH. THERE WAS A DIFFERENCE NOW BETWEEN THE CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS ON THE QUESTION, WITH BOTH SIDES TAKING POSITIONS ON EMOTIONAL GROUNDS. THE MOSLEMS SAW THE PURPOSE OF RES. 425 AS SOLELY TO GET ISRAEL TO WITHDRAW. THE CHRISTIANS SAW IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SOLVE THE ENTIRE PROBLEM OF THE PALESTINIAN ARMED PRESENCE. HE THOUGHT, HOWEVER, IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO GET A CONSENSUS CALLING FOR THE ABOLITION OF ALL IRREGULAR ARMED FORCES. HE NOTED IN THIS RESPECT THAT HE UNDERSTOOD PRESIDENT CHAMOUN AT A RECENT LUNCH AT MY HOUSE HAD SAID HE WOULD ACCEPT THIS IDEA. HE THOUGHT PIERRE GEMAYEL WOULD ALSO GO ALONG WITH IT EVEN IF BACHIR DID NOT. HE HAD SEEN CHAMOUN ON SATURDAY AND THE LATTER HAD CONFIRMED THAT HE WOULD ACCEPT SUCH A POSITION IF IT MEANT THE DISARMING OF THE PALESTINIANS. HE WAS SEEING PIERRE GEMAYEL IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. IT MIGHT THEREBY BE POSSIBLE TO GET A CONSENSUS ON THIS SUBJECT WHICH WOULD PROVE USEFUL.

11. SARKIS ASKED WHAT WE COULD DO ABOUT THE REINFORCEMENTS COMING VIA SYRIA. I SAID WE WERE DOING OUR BEST WITH THE SYRIANS AND ASKED OTHER STATES TO JOIN US. I HAD IMPRESSION,  
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HOWEVER, THAT ASAD WAS PRISONER OF BAATHIST IDEOLOGY AND VULNERABLE TO IRAQI PRESSURES. NEVERTHELESS I ALSO HAD IMPRESSION RATE OF INFILTRATION HAD SLACKENED AND THAT ACTUAL NUMBERS OF VOLUNTEERS WAS PERHAPS NOT AS GREAT AS WE HAD THOUGHT. SARKIS BROUGHT OUT A SHEET OF PAPER WHICH SAID THERE HAD BEEN A SIZEABLE ARRIVAL ON THE NIGHT OF THE 28-29TH OF MARCH BRINGING THE TOTAL UP TO ABOUT 1,000. OF THESE, 100 WERE MEDICAL AND PARAMEDICAL PERSONNEL. YESTERDAY THE PALESTINIANS HAD BEGUN TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS THROUGH THE SYRIANS TO SEND 150 OF THE VOLUNTEERS BACK. HE DID NOT KNOW WHY.

12. SARKIS SAID THE SYRIANS WERE UNHAPPY ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF VOLUNTEERS, PARTICULARLY THOSE FROM IRAQ, BECAUSE THEY REALIZED THAT EVERY RIFLE THEY BROUGHT IN WOULD BE TURNED AGAINST THE SYRIANS EVENTUALLY. HE AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SYRIANS WERE THE PRISONERS OF THEIR IDEOLOGY. FORTUNATELY, THE PALESTINIANS WERE ALSO DIVIDED AND ARAFAT WAS UNHAPPY ABOUT THE COMING OF THE REJECTIONIST ELEMENTS WHO WOULD OPPOSE FATAH. THAT MIGHT EXPLAIN THE DEPARTURE OF THE 150.

13. I CONCLUDED BY SAYING WE WERE FIRM IN OUR SUPPORT OF LEBANON AND WOULD DO EVERYTHING PRACTICABLE AND POSSIBLE

TO HELP. WE OF COURSE COULD NOT COMMIT FORCES HERE  
BUT COULD PERHAPS GIVE SOME HELP WITH THE TRANSPORT OF  
TROOPS AND SUPPLIES TO THE SOUTH BY SEA IF THAT WAS  
DESIRED. SARKIS SAID HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BAD FOR  
MORALE OF THE ARMY TO THINK IT COULD NOT EVEN CONTROL THE  
ROADS TO THE SOUTH AND HAD TO DEPEND ON FOREIGN SHIPPING  
TO GET THERE.

14. COMMENT. SARKIS APPEARS TO BE CONSIDERABLY MORE RELUCTANT  
TO SEND TROOPS TO SOUTH THAN EITHER BOUTROS OR KHOURY.  
HE TALKED IN TERMS, HOWEVER, WHICH MAKE ME WONDER  
WHETHER KHOURY IS SAYING ONE THING TO HIM AND SOMETHING  
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ELSE TO US. HE OBVIOUSLY IS GOING TO TAKE SOME CONVINCING.  
IF HOWEVER WE CAN GET HIS FEET WET WITH THE SENDING OF SYMBOLIC  
UNITS TO THE SOUTH TO START WORKING WITH UNIFIL AND IF  
WE CAN GET THE GENDARMERIE IN THAT AREA WE WILL HAVE  
MADE A START AND HE MAY BECOME MORE RELAXED ABOUT SENDING  
IN A LARGER CONTINGENT. I THINK A MAJOR  
CONSIDERATION IN HIS MIND, HOWEVER, IS PROBABLY THE  
FEAR THAT THE SITUATION IN AND AROUND BEIRUT WILL  
EXPLODE AND HE WILL BE LEFT WITH NO ARMY AT ALL UP HERE.

15. THE NEXT STEP IS TO TRY TO CONVINCE KHOURY THAT HE  
REALLY CAN SEND TROOPS TO THE SOUTH ALL BY HIMSELF.  
I AM NOT SURE HOW THAT IS TO BE DONE, BUT IT IS LIKELY  
TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD IF I PERSONALLY TRY TO DO IT. IT  
SEEMS TO ME THAT GENERAL SIILASVUO IS THE MOST  
APPROPRIATE PERSON FOR THE TASK SINCE HE AND ERSKINE  
ARE MUCH MORE FAMILIAR WITH THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND  
THAN WE ARE AND CAN PERHAPS GIVE KHOURY THE SORT OF  
PROFESSIONAL ENCOURAGEMENT HE NEEDS. MEANWHILE I AM  
GOING BACK TO THE CHARGE WITH BOUTROS THIS AFTERNOON.  
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## Message Attributes

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